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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2293

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN'S NEW BORDER SERVICE CHIEF HAS CLOSE TIES TO PRESIDENT

REF: ASHGABAT 114

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) President Berdimuhamedov's January 21 appointment of then State Counternarcotics Service (SCNS) Chief, Murad Islamov, to become the head of the State Border Service was yet another career boost for Islamov. It has become apparent that he is a government player who holds the confidence of the President and, as a result, a broad scope of responsibility. Because of his role at the SCNS and the recently close cooperation between that agency and the U.S. in counternarcotics assistance, Post has been able to gather a first-hand impression of this seemingly well-connected Turkmen official.

¶2. (C) Islamov was responsible for establishing the SCNS one year ago having received the tasking from President Berdimuhamedov. When the SCNS was created, Islamov was given a budget of USD five million and extensive resources. Previously, he had held the rank of Colonel in the Ministry of National Security (MNB), which at the time was the highest rank held by any MNB official. When he went to the SCNS, Islamov brought MNS personnel with him.

¶3. (C) While at the SCNS, Islamov appeared to be close to the President and operated differently from other officials. He was confident that he could get things done that others could not do. For example, in order to provide a particular type of radio equipment, Post needed a statement from the SCNS listing the specifications and providing a justification. Unlike other ministries, in dealing with the SCNS, Post could ask for the statement directly, without a formal request handled by the Foreign Ministry. In general, Post personnel could deal with SCNS personnel directly, without working through the Government gatekeeper, aka the Foreign Ministry.

¶4. (C) As the SCNS Chief, Islamov was not only willing to allow U.S. training in Turkmenistan, but was enthusiastically supportive of it. He said his goal was to bring the SCNS to "modern international standards" and that he needed foreign assistance in order to do that. He recognized that Turkmenistan did not have the experience necessary to develop its own counternarcotics service and was willing to do what was needed in order to improve the efficiency of the service.

Our view is that he is a capable person. He is able to understand a complex idea, develop a strategy to accomplish his goals, then execute that strategy. He clearly carries a great deal of authority and knows how to get things done within the Turkmen system. He should not be underestimated, but above all he is a loyal Turkmen that follows the party line.

MILES